

*"Tens of thousands of lives have been saved during the last 50 years because of injury policy initiatives. Government-enforced changes in the automobile such as improved standards for brakes, installation of seat belts, and use of child passenger restraints have been policies that have significantly reduced motor vehicle injuries. This strategic plan will further organize injury stakeholders in North Carolina to most effectively advocate for injury and violence policy changes that better protect the public."*

Marcus Plescia, M.D., MPH, 2003-2009  
Section Chief, Chronic Disease and Injury,  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The toll from injuries and violence in North Carolina is unacceptable. In addition to injury being the number-one cause of death for North Carolinians ages 1 to 48, the picture of injury is changing and is a cause for concern: unintentional falls and unintentional poisonings/drug overdoses combined will eclipse motor vehicle crashes as the leading causes of injury death if corrective actions are not taken in the near future. Yet, until now, there has been no comprehensive strategic plan to address these problems. Whether from falls, homicides, suicides, motor vehicle crashes, drownings, youth violence or other types of injuries, the deaths and related disabilities keep people from living to their full potential. Mistakenly, these injuries are often viewed as inevitable parts of our lives and labeled as accidents. In short, injuries are not accidents and they do not occur at random — there are identified risk and protective factors that make injuries and violence preventable.

Acknowledging the toll of injury, the N.C. General Assembly charged the state's Division of Public Health (DPH) with the task of administering an injury prevention program and leading the development of a comprehensive statewide prevention plan. This work has involved many complex factors and disciplines, with success demanding long-term collaboration with an extensive group of partners. The Division's Injury and Violence Prevention Branch (IVPB) invested much of the last year building upon existing relationships and identifying new ones. Fortunately, partners with a wealth of knowledge who are recognized authorities on a broad range of injury and violence topics quickly came to the table, not only from fields previously mentioned, but from other areas such as occupational injuries, cyberbullying, burns and sexual assault.

These partners share a deep passion for prevention and often have well-developed prevention plans of their own for their specific area of expertise. Acknowledging this, portions of their plans are reflected whenever possible in this larger state strategic plan. The IVPB also kept abreast of, and contributed input to, the injury and violence prevention recommendations coming from the N.C. Institute of Medicine's Prevention and Adolescent Health Task Forces, providing consistency across documents.

A critical component for the success of this plan will be the procurement of increased and sustained funding. Insufficient funding to date has been a major obstacle, with the state lagging behind many other states in spending on injury prevention. Annual state appropriations for the injury prevention program equal only about \$5.54 per death — less than the cost of a matinee ticket to the movies. Increased funding for injury prevention is certainly warranted, especially when considering injury is the leading cause of death for children.

Though this plan is ambitious, it is hoped that within five years, following the plan will result in a 15 percent reduction in the rate of morbidity and mortality from injury and violence. To increase the likelihood of success, the plan focuses on the three leading causes of death from unintentional injury — motor vehicle crashes, poisoning and falls — and the two leading causes of intentional injuries, suicide and homicide. The title of this document, *Building for Strength*, acknowledges its focus — partners working together in a strategic direction to accomplish six goals (listed on the next page) that will build and strengthen injury and violence prevention in North Carolina.

## THE SIX GOALS OF BUILDING FOR STRENGTH:

### North Carolina's Strategic Plan for Preventing Injuries and Violence

#### Goal 1: Data and Surveillance

Increase the use of injury and violence data through a comprehensive, coordinated injury surveillance system that is accurate, readily available and sustainable, and that is used to guide injury and violence prevention programs and policies at the local, regional and state levels.

#### Goal 2: Research and Evaluation

Foster efforts to conduct useful injury and violence research and evaluation, and foster efforts to disseminate findings to promote innovation and promising practices.

#### Goal 3: Messaging, Policy and Environmental Change

Develop strong, vocal community support for injury and violence prevention and the creation of safe environments by reframing unintentional injuries and violence as unacceptable and by promoting policies that support prevention of injury and violence.

#### Goal 4: Saving Lives

Reduce the rate of morbidity caused by injury and violence by 15 percent, thus also reducing injury- and violence-related mortality, by implementing prioritized, data-driven strategies and programs, policies, and innovative and tested practices. From March 2009 to December 2014, address the three leading causes of unintentional injuries and the two leading causes of intentional injuries to strategically reduce the overall rate of injury morbidity by 15 percent. Data from 2007 show the leading causes of unintentional injuries are **motor vehicle crashes, poisonings** and **falls**. The leading causes of intentional injuries (violence) are **suicide** and **assault/homicide**.


#### Goal 5: Building the Injury Prevention Community

Increase coordination among injury and violence prevention partners at the local, regional and state levels to create a more efficient system and a broader, stronger constituency.

#### Goal 6: Workforce Development

Develop a statewide injury and violence prevention workforce that meets core injury and violence prevention competencies as outlined by the National Training Initiative for Injury and Violence Prevention (NTI) and the State and Territorial Injury Prevention Directors Association (STIPDA).





*Injury has long been considered the most multidisciplinary area of public health, requiring a broad base of knowledge and skills to understand injury and develop effective prevention strategies. This plan was developed by a diverse group of partners with shared goals for prevention. Implementing the plan will require the efforts of many professions from a diverse group of agencies and organizations across North Carolina.*

Jeanne Givens, Retired. Applications and Programs Unit Head, Injury and Violence Prevention Branch

*North Carolina demonstrates the importance of partnerships in creating this State Strategic Plan for Injury and Violence Prevention. This critical public health issue must be addressed in multiple ways, at varying levels and with all populations. The plan will help N.C. to progress in making injury and violence prevention well integrated into many state systems and move towards a sustainable effort to reduce the toll of injuries in N.C.*

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